

California Oak Foundation

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AUG 26 1999

Our mission is to protect and preserve native oak woodlands

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RELEAF

August 25, 1999

Rick Breitenback
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Breitenback:

On behalf of the California Oak Foundation Board of Directors, I urge you to safeguard the oak woodlands in the state as a means of protecting critical watersheds and waterways. Please also consider the needs of these generous trees as you proceed since they are the key to protecting California's rich plant and animal biodiversity.

The oak woodlands that have stored and filtered water, sequestered carbons from the air, provided shade and held stream and river banks in times of flood have long been taken for granted by Californians. This attitude must change given the pressures of population, poor planning and devastating decisions to develop rural and agricultural areas, thus destroying the rural working landscape that has provided food for the state, the nation, and the world in the past.

California's ten million acres of oak woodlands are the basis of the state's most biologically rich and diverse ecosystems. Eagles, owls, hawks, reptiles, bobcats, foxes, deer, and more than 300 other vertebrate species alone depend on oak habitats during their breeding seasons; fully one-third of all mammals found in California depend on oak habitat. It is far more cost effective to protect these resources than to degrade them and be forced to restore them.

If the water table is drawn down 200 feet as has been suggested, the state will lose its Valley Oaks, already in rapid decline. The Oak Foundation has asked the Fish and Game Commission to list the Valley Oak as a species of special concern because research indicates that this habitat is in a 50 to 75 year transition back to grasslands. Please consider these important water and ecological needs as you proceed.

As vineyards are sprawling across the landscape as fast as shopping centers, and devastating everything in their path, I urge you to add the pumping of groundwater to miles and miles of vineyards to your list of

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concerns. Many rural landowners who have protected this ecosystem through private ownership and management of open lands are concerned -- and rightly so -- about the levels and safety of their own drinking wells.

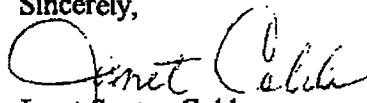
California has lost 95 per cent of its forests and 91 per cent of its wetlands through ignorance and greed. We must not lost our woodlands. We simply have not paid attention to the impacts of unchecked human development on the well being of all living things -- people, plants and animals.

Yours is a major responsibility. Thank you for your considerable efforts. Please feel free to contact the California Oak Foundation staff if you need additional information.

I trust you will do everything in your power to protect the watersheds, waterways, woodlands and wildlife of California.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Janet Santos Cobb
Executive Officer

cc: Governor Gray Davis
Secretary of Resources Mary Nichols
Chairman, Board of Forestry Robert Kerstiens
President, Fish and Game Commission Richard Thieriot